

Background and Meaning

Al-Shams begins with a series of oaths by signs in creation, then turns to the human soul and its moral responsibility. Ibn Kathir explains success through purification by obedience to Allah and failure through corrupting the soul with disobedience. The account of Thamud gives a concrete warning about the result of transgression and rejecting a messenger. The parent should read the opening signs, the statement about the soul and the historical example as one connected message about guidance, conduct and accountability.

Tafsir of the Surah

Ayat 1–4: Light and darkness. Ibn Kathir explains the oath by the sun and its brightness, then records explanations of the moon following it. The day reveals and the night covers with darkness. These changing signs draw attention to Allah's creation and ordering of the world. The passage moves through what people see around them before directing attention to the soul within them.

Ayat 5–8: Creation and moral understanding. Ibn Kathir discusses the wording about the building of the sky and spreading of the earth, then explains the forming of the soul in a sound original disposition. He records Ibn 'Abbas's explanation that Allah made clear to it good and evil. The ayat connect the creation of the human being with the ability to recognise the two paths, rather than treating conduct as something without guidance or responsibility.

Ayat 9–10: Purification and corruption. Ibn Kathir explains purification through obedience to Allah and cleansing the soul of base character and wrongdoing. Corrupting it includes abandoning guidance and falling into disobedience. He also records the explanation that purification is granted by Allah. His commentary therefore joins the need for righteous action with dependence upon the Lord who guides and purifies. The short pair of ayat states the central contrast around which the surah is arranged.

Ayat 11–13: Thamud's transgression. Ibn Kathir explains that Thamud rejected their messenger because of their wrongdoing and arrogance. Their most wretched man rose to attack the she-camel. The messenger named in the passage is Salih, who warned them against harming Allah's she-camel or interfering with her appointed turn to drink. The sign came with a clear command; their response showed their refusal to submit.



Tafsir of the Surah • Continued

Ayat 14–15: The consequence of shared rejection. The people denied Salih and killed the she-camel. Ibn Kathir records the explanation that they shared responsibility through their agreement with that act. Their Lord destroyed them because of their sin, and the punishment encompassed them. He prefers the explanation of the closing ayah that Allah fears no consequence or retaliation from anyone. The account completes the warning: strength and collective approval cannot protect transgression from Allah's judgement.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا

١

Memorised

By the sun and its radiance.

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَّهَا

٢

Memorised

And the moon as it follows it.

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا جَلَّهَا

٣

Memorised

And the day as it reveals it.

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا

٤

Memorised

And the night as it conceals it.

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا

٥

Memorised

And the sky and He who built it.

وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا

٦

Memorised

And the earth and He who spread it.



وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا



Memorised

And the soul and He who proportioned it.

فَالْهَمَّهَا فَجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا



Memorised

And inspired it with its wickedness and its righteousness.

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا



Memorised

Successful is he who purifies it.

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا



Memorised

Failing is he who corrupts it.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا



Memorised

Thamood denied in its pride.

إِذْ أَتَبَعَتْ أَشَقَّاهَا



Memorised

When it followed its most wicked.



فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا

١٣



Memorised

The messenger of Allah said to them, "This is the she-camel of Allah, so let her drink."

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَدَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ
بِذُنُوبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا

١٤



Memorised

But they called him a liar, and hamstrung her. So their Lord crushed them for their sin, and leveled it.

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا

١٥



Memorised

And He does not fear its sequel.

Parent tafsir: adapted from Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 91:1-15.

Arabic commentary: quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura91-aya1.html

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